



School Superintendents of Alabama  
400 S. Union Street, Suite 495  
Montgomery, AL 36104

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

November 24, 2014

Dear Commissioner:

I am writing today in response to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler's recently announced proposal to raise the E-Rate funding cap by \$1.5 billion. The E-Rate program currently represents the only source of federal funding aimed at educational technology and is critical in providing discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access. As the Director of Governmental Affairs for the School Superintendents of Alabama, I strongly support the infusion of the additional funding, and urge you to do the same.

The E-rate program has been a lifeline for Alabama students. In 1996, when the program first began, we actively worked with school systems to advance the state technology plan by applying for e-rate discounts. Our school systems did and we, as a state, have benefited tremendously. In addition, our state is currently working on a plan to upgrade wireless LANS in every classroom in our state through a bond and e-rate.

To raise the cap of the E-Rate program by \$1.5 billion, the Universal Service Fund fee will increase annual individual contributions by \$1.92. This 16 additional cents per month—less than half a penny per day—is approximately the cost of a cup of coffee. This proposal is both reasonable and justified, asking contributors to forgo one cup of coffee over the course of a year to ensure that our nation's schools are connected to the internet in a way that supports 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and prepares them for post-secondary opportunity.

The single most effective step the FCC can take to bolster E-Rate's current and future success is to ensure that the program's funding is adequate to support the program's changes and goals as adopted in July. Chairman Wheeler's proposal does just that, representing a deliberate effort to expand educational opportunities for our nation's students. By focusing on high-capacity broadband connections to the internet (particularly those in rural communities) and providing sustained, additional funding to the E-Rate program, the modernized E-Rate will ensure that Alabama schools are able to keep pace with ever increasing connectivity needs.

Thank you for considering my response as you move forward with your decision on the E-Rate program and its funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa A. Woodard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being the most prominent.

Lisa A. Woodard  
Governmental Affairs Director  
School Superintendents of Alabama